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SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION: MORE TIP COVERAGE

11. SUMMARY: TIP media coverage has abated slightly, but still remains a focus of media attention. Last week saw only one additional formal statement by an Omani official or institution, the State Council, whose statement did not mention TIP directly. A news report by Arabic daily "As Shabiba" linked a prostitution arrest to TIP efforts. In a commentary on June 30, "As Shabiba" called for Omanis to simply disregard the TIP report. END SUMMARY.

Principles that Secure Human Dignity and Rights

12. On June 25, all English and Arabic dailies carried an Oman News Agency article of an official statement by the State Council (Majlis A'Dawla) Chairman, Dr. Yahiya al-Manthari, relating to the TIP report. The article did not directly mention TIP, the Department of State, or the U.S. "Dignity and Rights of Omanis and Expatriates are Secure in the Sultanate" said:
"Both citizens and expatriates benefit from the development in the Sultanate in the prosperous era of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, whose rule is based on principles that secure human dignity and rights. The Sultanate has been committed to respecting international and regional charters and conventions, as well as established international laws...[Oman's] principles, laws and procedures secure the rights of all residents, maintain their dignity, and provide them with security and stability, ensuring that they live in harmony with the Omani people. Reports on Oman, including the one by the World Bank on growth and development, ranked the Sultanate among the best 13 emerging nations in the world. The common features covered in the report include availability of a system that preserves people's rights. This is further evidence of Oman's good reputation and the international respect for its principles based on justice, equality, respect for regional and international conventions, as well as non-interference in the affairs of others."

Prostitution Conviction Linked to TIP

13. On June 28, private Arabic daily "As Shabiba" (circulation 20,000) reported the conviction of an Asian national for running a prostitution ring, associating the bust with TIP in the article's title. Analysis will be reported Septel. According to "The Omani Judiciary Faces Trafficking in Persons":

"Seeb court convicted an Asian national for running a prostitution ring and sharing the profits with the prostitutes. He was sentenced to four months in prison and a 20 rial fine, in addition to another month for violating the labor law and foreign residency law. He will be expelled from the country after serving his sentence. His female accomplices were convicted of prostitution and sentenced to four months in prison, in addition to another month in prison for violating the labor law and foreign residency law. They will also be expelled after serving their sentence. The Omani Police received a tip about illegal activities and presented the findings to the

Public Prosecutor, who issued the warrant and made the arrests."

A Weight That it Doesn't Deserve

¶4. On June 30, Arabic daily "Al Shabibah" (circulation 20,000) commented that readers should ignore the TIP report. "Why Should We Be Outraged by the U.S. Report?" said:
"If we have confidence in ourselves and trust our courts and judicial system, why we are so angry [at the report], giving it a weight that it doesn't deserve? That report, given its origin, does not deserve our attention at all, and we should not give it more. Some believe that the public and official responses sent the correct message to the U.S., which sees itself as the policeman of the world. We should consider such reports as "remarks" rather than truths. We can study these remarks and consider reforms to achieve goals that are far more noble than the goals of the report writers."
FONTENEAU